

Connecticut General Assembly Appropriations Committee

Thursday, February 21, 2013

**Jeri Powell, State Director, Great New England Public Schools Alliance (GNEPSA)
Testifies Before the Connecticut General Assembly Appropriations Committee on
Governor Malloy's Budget Proposal:**

Co-Chairs Harp and Walker, and members of the committee:

My name is Jeri Powell, State Director of the Great New England Public Schools Alliance. I thank you for this opportunity to offer comments regarding Governor Malloy's budget recommendations for the Department of Education.

I first want to acknowledge the difficult task you have before you in balancing any number of important priorities in the face of these challenging fiscal times. With that in mind, we respectfully note several points we hope you will consider as you move forward with your important work this year.

Equitable Funding for Schools

- We encourage the committee to consider the importance of equitable school funding in Connecticut so that ALL schools have sufficient resources to meet the unique needs of students attending that school.
- Furthermore, all public school students, regardless of the type of school they choose to attend, deserve comparable resources for their education. Each public school student in Connecticut is equal under the law, and we don't hold our students to different standards based on whether they attend a public neighborhood school, public magnet school, or public charter school.
- Our current educational system already puts students attending charter schools at a disadvantage by receiving less per-pupil spending than a traditional public school would receive to educate the same student.
- We encourage the committee to take all measures to protect the funding currently allocated for charter school students by the Governor's budget, with a view towards equitable funding for all students.

Funding Allocation

- While we advocate for governance structures and policies that put a premium on student achievement, to the extent practical, we also encourage innovation and believe this is achieved in part when funding is not restricted.
- We support funding for the Commissioner's Network to enable the turnaround of more underperforming schools.

Advance Policies from Last Session

- We also encourage the committee to support the advancement of the education priorities passed last session.
- In particular, implementing a robust and effective teacher evaluation program across the state is vitally important.
- Ensuring adequate funding to support this process is critical.

Finally, we believe that underlying the budget discussion is the importance of fiscal transparency and accountability. Investing in education is the best path forward for the future growth and vitality of this state, but only if that investment is equitable and efficient, with a rigorous eye towards real results. We ask that as you move forward in your work this session, you take this opportunity to improve mechanisms designed to ensure dollars are being spent in the most effective way.

We look forward to continued work with the Governor, State Legislature and key stakeholders to increase transparency and accountability in an effort to ensure taxpayer dollars are being spent wisely for the benefit of students.

Thank you for your time.